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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 001807

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: EXTRA-JUDICIAL "CROSSFIRE" KILLINGS DROP SHARPLY

Classified By: P/E Counselor D.C. McCullough

1. (SBU) Police "crossfire" deaths in March fell 62 percent from January, according to press reports compiled by prominent human rights NGO Odhikar. "Crossfires" by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) plummeted even more, from 12 in January to just two each in February and March. Regular police continue to account for the bulk of the deaths, or 86 out of 105 for the first three months of 2005. The other three deaths came from the Cobras and the Cheetahs, two small police units. For the first 17 days of April, there were 12 reported "crossfire" deaths, none involving RAB.

2. (C) Comment: Extra-judicial killings have apparently not stopped, as senior BDG officials maintain, but they are down sharply. This positive trend, starting in February, coincides with promises made then by senior BDG officials to the Ambassador to address this issue. While quiet diplomacy appears to have worked well in this case, we will continue to press key BDG interlocutors for the complete elimination of extra-judicial killing. Even if March's relatively low figure of 21 deaths were sustained for the rest of 2005, that would still leave a yearly total of 294.

THOMAS